Diplomacy and Counterterrorism: How Diplomatic Relationships Affected the CIA in Afghanistan From 1996-2001

Joseph Vincent
Carroll College

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Diplomacy and Counterterrorism:
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By Joseph Vincent

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DIPLOMACY AND COUNTERTERRORISM: HOW DIPLOMATIC RELATIONSHIPS AFFECTED THE CIA IN AFGHANISTAN FROM 1996-2001

PAPER SUBMITTED IN FULLFILLMENT OF REQUIREMENTS OF AN HONORS THESIS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPARTMENT

BY
JOSEPH VINCENT

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Introduction

On August 7, 1998, the United States Embassies in Tanzania and in Kenya were attacked by Osama bin Laden.\(^1\) Afterwards, the primary goal of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Afghanistan was to either capture or kill bin Laden and to subdue Al Qaeda.\(^2\) During this time, the CIA faced many factors that contributed to the eventual failure of the CIA to achieve its goals. These factors, hereafter known as constraints, “checked, restricted, [and] compelled” the CIA “to avoid or perform some action[s].”\(^3\) The focus of this thesis is to identify and understand those areas of constraint that existed within the international system of central Asia.

Certain states were chosen for various reasons. The U.S., as a major world power, held relationships with all of the aforementioned states and played a role in how those states acted in their relations to Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia was one of only three states to diplomatically recognize the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan (Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates were the other two). Religious reasons, in that both states followed Sunni Islam, also played a role. One of the Five Pillars of Islam is donating (mostly with money) to the poor.\(^4\) Since Afghanistan was a third world country, it received aid from Saudi Arabia. Pakistan, too, played an important role. From Pakistan came diplomatic recognition, aid, weapons, and unquestionable support. It also bordered Afghanistan, making the relationship even more important. And like Saudi

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Arabia, the two states shared a religious connection. Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan played a less important role. All three shared borders with Afghanistan, but all were afraid of the Taliban threat to their own countries. The CIA, however, did try to work with these countries, as did the U.S. government in general. The states that will be considered are the United States, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia.

Why not mention China, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), or Iran? In the case of China, nothing in my research indicated that it shared anything more than a border with Afghanistan. The UAE recognized the Taliban, and perhaps even had relations with bin Laden. But as with China, little could be found in my research to expand on this. Iran, sharing a border with Afghanistan and being a state of a rival religious tradition (Shia Islam), had such a poor relationship with the U.S. that seeking its help seemed rather pointless, at least concerning the pre-9/11 world.

The questions this thesis shall focus on are: How did the relationships between the U.S., the Taliban, and Osama bin Laden affect the CIA in Afghanistan? What role did Pakistan play within the Taliban-U.S. relationship? What was the role of the central Asian states of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, with regard to the U.S. and the Taliban? And finally, what role did Saudi Arabia play?

Why are these factors important? External factors are essential to the study of international relations. They provide another perspective that can (when combined with internal and individual levels of analysis) contribute to an overall point of view that is important when conducting diplomacy and covert action. It is therefore necessary to
study why states behave the way that they do. This thesis will also serve as a case study that will explain why external factors are important to the decision-making process.

It is important to note that this study will not focus on all the factors that resulted in the CIA failure to capture bin Laden. Instead, this thesis will focus solely on the relations between states. Issues such as actionable intelligence, confusion over orders to capture or kill bin Laden, and debates over the Predator drone will only be used as background to issues that will be discussed later in the thesis. A general history covering the Church Committee hearings and the Anti-Soviet Jihad in Afghanistan will provide an additional context surrounding CIA operations. Both histories present a background that offers an understanding of why there were internal disagreements in the CIA – and the U.S. government in general – as well as explain how the setting of central Asia in 1996 emerged.
Chapter I

Background and the CIA in Afghanistan – 1996-2001

The Church Committee Hearings

In 1973, Richard Nixon appointed James Schlesinger as Director of Central Intelligence. After taking office and hearing about certain questionable activities within the agency, Schlesinger ordered all CIA employees to report any suspected incidences where CIA employees were breaking the law. A nearly seven hundred page document resulted from the investigation. This document came to be known as the “family jewels.” The document reported such instances where the CIA investigated and tracked mail from the Soviet Union, the CIA’s Operation CHAOS (where the CIA spied on U.S. citizens), the testing of drugs on unknown subjects to determine their effects, and the detaining of suspects without trial. Over a year later, in 1974, a New York Times journalist named Seymour Hersh heard about the family jewels. Hersh’s article led to the creation of three federal committees to investigate the CIA, the most famous being the Church Committee, headed by Senator Frank Church.

The CIA received the brunt of the blame for the illegal activities it partook in, despite the fact that the executive branch had always directed the agency to participate in such activities. According to Tim Weiner, such blame “badly missed the point by absolving the presidents who had driven the [CIA].” Those CIA officers involved in the

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1 Unless otherwise noted, the following section on the Church Committee comes from Ronald Kessler, Inside the CIA, (New York, NY: Pocket Books, 1992), pp. 80-88.

2 Ibid., p. 80.

3 Ibid., p. 81.

4 Ibid., pp. 80, 82.
abuses felt betrayed by their government for what they saw as simply following orders. Many CIA agents, however, were ignorant of the family jewels. Many employees became demoralized over what some at the agency had done, how it all had become public, and how the whole of the agency was receiving blame. An end result of the hearings was the House and Senate committees on intelligence oversight.⁶

CIA employees who were starting at the agency during the Church hearings, and those who joined after, worked “in an atmosphere of both intense public scrutiny of the agency and an environment of congressional oversight.”⁷ According to Ronald Kessler, this new group of employees would employ a cautionary approach through the following decades.

This caution is very important when studying CIA activities in Afghanistan. Fear of public and political retribution limited what management level CIA employees – the group most willing to exercise constraint – were willing to do to achieve their goals. No one at the agency wanted another Church committee, and many wanted to play it safe, and so chose to not do anything that could be seen a potentially illegal or politically harmful.

The Anti-Soviet Jihad

A communist regime took power in Afghanistan in 1977. The Muslim citizens of Afghanistan, however, despised their “godless government” and prepared for a revolt.⁸


⁶ Kessler, pp. 85, 86, 88.

The Soviet politburo – or the cabinet of the Soviet Union – feared what the communist fall in Afghanistan would mean for the rest of Soviet central Asia, which harbored “more than forty million Muslims.” They concluded that Afghanistan was not a country that they could afford to lose. When the Soviets invaded Afghanistan in 1979, President Jimmy Carter approved of supplying money, weapons, and training to the Afghan Mujahedin (or holy warriors).

The Soviet invasion, according to the former counterterrorism czar, Richard Clarke, was a major deployment for which [the Soviets] were not ready, equipped, or trained. The initial fighting showed the weakness of the Red Army’s conscript divisions, but Moscow responded with Spetsnaz Special Forces and Airborne troops. They began to employ heavily armed helicopters and new close-support aircraft, which were beginning in 1985 to have devastating effects.

The helicopters proved to be the most effective tool of the Soviet army. The Afghan Mujahedin had no defense against these attacks and no way to bring the helicopters down. In response, the U.S. provided Stinger missiles, which were highly advanced anti-aircraft heat seeking missiles. The weapon proved so effective that the Soviet army stopped using helicopter attacks altogether.

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8 Weiner, p. 365.
9 Ibid., p. 365.
10 Ibid., p. 365.
13 Ibid., p. 48.
14 Ibid., pp. 49-50.
The Soviet Union eventually left Afghanistan in 1989 at the end of the Cold War, leaving the country in a state of civil war. According to the journalist Tim Weiner, the CIA viewed the Anti-Soviet Jihad as a complete success. They had “given the Soviets their Vietnam.”

It is important to note that the United States was not the only country to supply aid to the Afghan Mujahedin. According to Weiner, “the Saudis matched the CIA’s support for the rebels, dollar for dollar. The Chinese kicked in millions of dollars’ worth of weapons, as did the Egyptians and the British.” Pakistan also proved indispensable as a staging area for the CIA and provided training to the Mujahedin.

The jihad was important because it set the stage for the next decade. Without the jihad, it could be argued that the Taliban would never have come to power. It is also plausible that a different government in Afghanistan could have been pro-U.S. and willing to assist the CIA in the capture of bin Laden. However, since it was the Taliban that came to power and harbored bin Laden, the agency focused its counterterrorist efforts on central Asia in the late 1990’s.

The CIA in Afghanistan – 1996-2001

Instead of providing a long history of a secret agency in Afghanistan, it may be best to look at some of the main issues and events surrounding the CIA in Afghanistan.

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15 Payne and Nassar, p. 343.
16 Weiner, p. 420.
17 Ibid., p. 420.
18 Ibid., p. 384.
19 Clarke, p. 50.
from 1996 to 9/11. These issues are: concern over the availability of actionable intelligence collected by the Afghan tribal assets, the relationship between the U.S. and the Northern Alliance, questions over whether to capture or kill bin Laden, and last, problems with the predator drone.

Actionable Intelligence

After the African embassy bombings, the CIA, according to the 9/11 Commission, received intelligence claiming that “terrorist leaders, including [b]in Laden, would be meeting at a terrorist camp in Afghanistan.”20 Tomahawk missiles were launched at al Qaeda camps on August 20, 1998, but failed to kill bin Laden.21 George Tenet concluded that the missiles “missed [b]in Ladin by a few hours.”22 An unfortunate side effect of this failed missile attack was the belief that the CIA was incapable of producing current intelligence of bin Laden’s whereabouts and future destinations, or actionable intelligence that would justify further missile strikes.23 According to the 9/11 Commission:

There were frequent reports about Bin Ladin’s whereabouts and activities. The daily reports regularly described where he was, what he was doing, and where he might be going. But usually, by the time the descriptions were landing on the desks of DCI Tenet or National Security Advisor Berger, Bin Ladin had already moved.24

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21 Ibid., p. 3.


24 Ibid., p. 7.
This problem severely limited the capabilities of the military to assist the CIA with further missile strikes and with military snatch operations.

Intelligence in Afghanistan was collected primarily through Afghan tribal assets, or proxies, that the CIA made contact with during the Soviet Jihad in the 1980's.\textsuperscript{25} According to Weiner, "In September and October 1998, the Afghans claimed they had mounted four unsuccessful ambushes against bin Laden."\textsuperscript{26} The proxies provided a number of reasons as to why no capture operation was successful. These explanations included that bin Laden took a different route than they thought he would; that there were too many guards; and that they heard women and children with him. Few in the CIA believed these claims, which created mistrust of the proxies and the intelligence that they provided.\textsuperscript{27}

Despite these problems, the proxies provided some good intelligence on where bin Laden had been and had even been able to provide intelligence on where he would be, though this was rare.\textsuperscript{28} Intelligence on bin Laden was difficult to come by and generally unreliable. One way of gathering better intelligence was through the Northern Alliance.

\textsuperscript{25} "Intelligence Policy," p. 10.

\textsuperscript{26} Weiner, p. 472.

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p. 472.

\textsuperscript{28} "The Military," p. 7.
The Northern Alliance-U.S. Relationship

The Northern Alliance was considered by many, including George Tenet (then Director of Central Intelligence), as the best group of Afghans that could supply reliable intelligence and mount successful covert operations.29 One reason was that the Northern Alliance was fighting the Taliban in the Afghan civil war.30

When the Northern Alliance was contacted by the CIA in 1999, Ahmed Shah Massoud – military leader of the Northern Alliance – proposed a “grand alliance” where the two sides would provide mutual assistance.31 The Northern Alliance hoped to receive U.S. help in defeating the Taliban, while the Alliance proposed to help the CIA establish a base in northern Afghanistan. This deal would mean that the CIA could mount its own operations against bin Laden. Many at the CIA were excited about this possibility, but the risk to CIA personnel was considered too great within the CIA management. Massoud’s plan was not employed.32

Other factors also prevented the U.S. government from fully backing the Northern Alliance. First, Massoud was not the most ethical individual. Under his leadership, the Northern Alliance had “sold opium, abused human rights, and had killed civilians.”33 This made most within the U.S. government cautious about backing the Northern Alliance.34 Regardless, the Northern Alliance continued to work with the CIA, providing

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29 “Intelligence Policy,” p. 10.
31 Weiner, p. 475.
32 Ibid., p. 475.
34 9/11 Commission Report, p. 188.
some intelligence in return for small amounts of money.  

On at least one occasion, the Northern Alliance had the chance to kill bin Laden. However, the CIA prevented them from doing so, fearing that it would violate the ban on assassinations.

Capture or Kill?

In 1998, Clinton approved through a Memorandum of Notification (MON) covert operations to capture bin Laden. The MON was a paper sponsored by the president that provided the legal authority for a covert operation. It was meant to assure the CIA that whatever action it took was legally justifiable as long as it fell within the boundaries of the MON. It also outlined the possible repercussions – diplomatic and domestic – should an operation not go according to plan. For example, looking back at the Church committee hearings, had the CIA received the MON prior to initiating the illegal activities that it was charged for, perhaps more of the blame would have fallen on the executive branch and the presidents and not on the CIA. Also, if the activities in question were to take place overseas, the MON could protect CIA employees from foreign legal repercussions by showing that they were acting under the direct orders of the president.

When the capture operations turned out to be unsuccessful, Clinton approved in writing for the CIA and its proxies to kill bin Laden. However, according to the 9/11 Commission, the MON was filled with so much legalese and phrases left to interpretation.

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37 Ibid., 126.

38 Coll, p. 424.
that many at the CIA saw the MON as just another approval for a capture operation.\textsuperscript{39}

According to Coll:

\begin{quote}
[MON] language, in a succession of bin Laden-focused MONs, always expressed some ambiguity … Some CIA officers and supervisors read their MONs and worried that if an operation in Afghanistan went bad, they would be accused of having acted outside the memo’s scope.\textsuperscript{40}
\end{quote}

Management-level CIA officers feared that the MON would be the slippery slope into a repeat of the Church committee hearings. Since the MON left room for interpretation, CIA management instructed it’s working level employees to use caution.\textsuperscript{41}

At the White House, National Security Council (NSC) staff members understood the MON completely differently. They drafted the MON assuming that there would be no confusion at the CIA. It called for the death of bin Laden, but only in the context of a capture operation and only in self defense. According to the NSC, it did not want the MON to be “interpreted as an unrestricted license to kill.”\textsuperscript{42} Allowing such instructions within the MON would be unethical and politically damaging.

This confusion and lack of clarity limited the opportunities available to the CIA, the proxies, and the Northern Alliance, to kill bin Laden. If the CIA thought that they would be legally blamed for following the orders of the President, they would have looked at the instructions of the MON with a worst-case scenario mentality. They therefore chose to exercise caution in the face of possible legal repercussions. Intelligence on bin Laden’s whereabouts for a capture operation would become more reliable with the launching of the Predator drone, but it came too late.

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{39} “Intelligence Policy,” p. 9.
  \item \textsuperscript{40} Coll, p. 425.
  \item \textsuperscript{41} Ibid., pp. 424-25.
  \item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., p. 425.
\end{itemize}
The Predator

The Predator drone is a “small pilotless aircraft equipped with video cameras and spy sensors …”\textsuperscript{43} This drone can fly through Afghanistan and pick up video footage that could not previously have been seen without the use of a satellite, and then send that video footage back to CIA headquarters.\textsuperscript{44} Initially the CIA was reluctant to pay for the Predator drones, arguing that it should be a cost of the Defense Department. An agreement was reached where both sides would share the costs.\textsuperscript{45} The initial test flights over Afghanistan were so successful that White House and CIA officials demanded to have more of the flights. In fact, on one of the first flights in September 2000, the drone got footage of a tall man in white who was surrounded by security guards. Analysts came to the conclusion that this man was Osama bin Laden.\textsuperscript{46} Bin Laden was believed to have been spotted at least one more time in subsequent trial runs.\textsuperscript{47}

There was only one time where the Predator faced physical danger, and that was when the Predator was picked up on Taliban radar. The Taliban sent an old MiG fighter to shoot it down. The pilot, however, was unable to see the Predator.\textsuperscript{48}

The U.S. Air Force soon developed a plan to have a missile attached to the bottom of the Predator, so that if bin Laden were spotted again, he could be killed then and there. In the meantime, debates began over whether or not to continue the Predator flights until

\textsuperscript{43} Weiner, p. 479.

\textsuperscript{44} “Intelligence Policy,” p. 5.

\textsuperscript{45} 9/11 Commission Report, p. 189.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., p. 190.

\textsuperscript{47} “Intelligence Policy,” p. 5.

\textsuperscript{48} Clarke, p. 221.
the armed version was ready. On the one hand, unarmed Predator flights were encouraged just in case bin Laden could be found at a good enough place and at a good enough time to warrant a missile strike or capture/kill operation. On the other hand, it was argued that continued Predator flights would take away the element of surprise, since it had been picked up on radar once before.\(^{49}\) On September 4, 2001, the latter side won, and no more Predator flights were planned for launch prior to the introduction of the armed Predator in the spring of 2002.\(^{50}\)

These were the issues that the CIA had to deal with in its hunt for Osama bin Laden. It was hard to gather reliable intelligence that the CIA could use in order to launch an immediate and effective snatch operation. There were issues with getting effective allies within Afghanistan (i.e., the Northern Alliance). There were questions and concerns over whether or not the CIA had the authority to capture or kill bin Laden. And there were problems with the employment of the Predator drone. These issues would be exacerbated by the diplomatic relationships that the U.S. and Afghanistan had with Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Saudi Arabia.

\(^{49}\) 9/11 Commission Report, p. 211.

\(^{50}\) Ibid., pp 213-14.
Chapter II

The Taliban, Osama bin Laden, and the United States of America

The U.S. and the Taliban

When the Taliban first came to power in 1996, it were seen by the U.S. government as a group that would bring stability to Afghanistan. Such stability would have provided a number of benefits to the U.S., which included a pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and into Pakistan, an end to the spread of Iran’s Islamic revolution, and it could have given the U.S. “a potential ally in the international war against drugs.”

This silent support ended in 1998 when bin Laden attacked the U.S. Embassies in Africa. After the retaliatory missile strikes, U.S. and Taliban officials met to discuss bin Laden. The U.S. representatives told the Taliban to give up bin Laden. 2 After saying no, the Taliban leaders, according to then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, provided many excuses to justify their answer: they said that refusing a man shelter was against their cultural norms. They claimed that “bin Laden was a hero to Afghans because of his role in ousting the Soviets and that the Taliban would be overthrown if they betrayed him in response to American pressure.” They also claimed that bin Laden was innocent of the bombings because bin Laden said so. 3 In an attempt to persuade the Taliban, the U.S. and the U.N. imposed sanctions on the Taliban. This did not appear to have concerned

1 Mary Anne Weaver, Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002), p. 27.


the leader of the Taliban, Mullah Muhammad Omar. According to the *9/11 Commission Report:*

[Omar was] unconcerned about commerce with the outside world. Omar had virtually no diplomatic contact with the west, since he refused to meet with non-Muslims. The United States learned that at the end of 1999, the Taliban Council of Ministers unanimously reaffirmed that their regime would stick by bin Laden.\(^4\)

During the Clinton administration, the U.S. tried several other strategies to convince the Taliban to hand over bin Laden. One was telling the Taliban that should bin Laden attack the U.S., the Taliban would be held directly responsible and would suffer U.S. retribution.\(^5\) A second strategy was to convince multiple countries to put pressure on the Taliban.\(^6\) While these efforts were being employed, the CIA was given the authority to conduct covert action in Afghanistan to either capture or kill bin Laden.\(^7\) Another job of the CIA was to work with the Northern Alliance. For reasons either previously mentioned or mentioned below, these strategies did not have the overall desired effect.

The Bush administration employed some similar policies, and also undertook some new ones. As during the Clinton administration, U.S. representatives repeated the threat that if the Taliban did not hand over bin Laden, then the Taliban would be held directly responsible for any terrorist attack that al Qaeda committed against the U.S.\(^8\) Covert action in Afghanistan and diplomacy with other states (e.g., Saudi Arabia,

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\(^5\) *Clarke*, p. 208.

\(^6\) *Albright*, p. 8.

\(^7\) "Intelligence Policy," p. 4.

Pakistan) also continued. However, unlike the Clinton administration, whatever attention was given to the Northern Alliance was spread out to include other Afghan ethnic and militant groups. Also, the Bush administration proposed as a last resort the overthrow of the Taliban regime, something that the Clinton administration had never considered.

**The Taliban and Osama bin Laden**

After being forced to leave Sudan in 1996 due to international pressure, Osama bin Laden returned to Afghanistan, where the Taliban “welcomed [him] enthusiastically.” In Afghanistan, according to the *9/11 Commission Report*, bin Laden ran terrorist training camps and planned terrorist operations while under the protection of the Taliban and Pakistan. The Taliban, unlike the Sudanese, gave al Qaeda members the freedom to move around the country at will, as well as enter and exit the country while being excluded from immigration procedures. The Taliban also provided al Qaeda with Ministry of Defense license plates. The Taliban benefited from the infrastructure buildup, weapons, aid, money, and soldiers that bin Laden supplied the Taliban. As a member of the Saudi royal family and son of Mohammed bin Laden – founder of the

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10 Ibid., p. 5.


12 Clarke, p. 148.


largest construction firm in Saudi Arabia.\textsuperscript{15} Osama had a lot of money to throw around, which was a luxury the Taliban lacked.\textsuperscript{16} As the benefits to both parties accrued, a co-dependence developed between the two. It came to the point that "Mullah Omar must have concluded that without bin Laden his power in Afghanistan would be threatened."\textsuperscript{17} There was also a personal connection that developed between Mullah Omar and bin Laden. Along with the shared ideological beliefs, they were also relatives. Shortly after arriving in Afghanistan, a daughter of bin Laden married Mullah Omar, making bin Laden Omar's father-in-law.\textsuperscript{18}

After the embassy bombings in 1998, some in the Taliban saw benefits in having bin Laden removed from Afghanistan. The most likely reason for this is all the U.S. and international threats and sanctions the Taliban had to endure for bin Laden. This minority, however, did not have enough power to act on their wishes, and in 1999, "the Taliban’s Council of Ministers[...unanimously endorsed its alliance with al Qaeda."\textsuperscript{19} Mullah Omar had all dissenters executed.\textsuperscript{20}

\textbf{Areas of Constraint to the CIA}

One of the problems with regard to the U.S. relationship with the Taliban from 1996 to 2001, a problem for the CIA was the lack of interest in the Northern Alliance.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p. 84.
\textsuperscript{16} Weaver, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{17} Albright, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 28.
\textsuperscript{19} Coll, p. 514.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 514.
The Northern Alliance was the best option the U.S. government had at getting bin Laden, short of introducing special operations teams and CIA paramilitary officers and operations officers. After all, they were the only Afghan group with the ability to fight the Taliban on any significant level (which is shown by the ability of the Northern Alliance to withhold the upper portion of Afghanistan from the Taliban). However, it is not clear whether or not the U.S. government as a whole realized the possible value of this group.

Taliban support for al Qaeda coupled with a lack of U.S. recognition also proved to be an obstacle. If the Taliban were unwilling to cooperate on the bin Laden issue, it would become more difficult for CIA officers to operate within Afghanistan. However, this was only an obstacle. It becomes a problem when there is no effective base to operate out of. Without diplomatic recognition, there would be no consulate or legation by which the CIA could work from. The CIA would be forced to find other places to work, which affected planning for capture or kill operations and potential military planning. It would also affect the way the U.S. acted in its relations to Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

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21 Ibid., p. 539.
Chapter III

Pakistan

Afghan Relations

After the Soviet Jihad ended in 1989, Pakistan was determined to have a friendly government controlling Afghanistan.¹ Throughout the subsequent civil war and after, the Pakistani government saw the Taliban movement as the best candidate for an ally. The Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (or ISI, the Pakistani intelligence agency) supplied the Taliban with weapons and aid to help them win their war.²

There was one primary reason Pakistan desired a friendly Afghanistan: so that there would be an ally to the west that could protect Pakistan should it go to war with India in the east.³ Other considerations included a need for a stable Afghanistan for other security purposes and to allow for safer trade routes through Afghanistan to countries north and west of Pakistan.⁴ Another consideration was the help the Taliban provided to Pakistan, which came in the form of the highly effective jihadist soldiers who fought in the disputed Kashmir region.⁵ In short, Pakistan saw the Taliban as essential to its security in the region.

During the nineties, the ISI maintained contacts with the Taliban and bin Laden, and even operated ISI training centers in Afghanistan.⁶ Despite U.S. pressure after the

² Clarke, p. 141.
³ “Diplomacy,” p. 11.
⁴ Albright, p. 10.
⁵ “Diplomacy,” p. 11.
Africa Embassy Bombings in 1998, the Pakistani government continued to support the Taliban. In December of 2000, the United Nations passed Security Council Resolution 1333, which, among other things, banned the selling of weapons to the Taliban. This did not, however, stop Pakistan from continuing to send weapons into Afghanistan.\(^7\) It was not worth the loss of it’s security.

There were only two instances I could find that provided windows of opportunity where Pakistan would be more helpful concerning bin Laden. The first was in May of 1999. The Prime Minister of Pakistan at the time, Nawaz Sharif, ordered Pakistani soldiers to invade a strategic part of Kashmir. This set off international concern over the potential of a nuclear war with India. Later that year, Sharif visited President Clinton in Washington, D.C., where Clinton pressured Sharif over the Kashmir crises and bin Laden. U.S. pressure along with pressure from Saudi Arabia, Europe, and India eventually forced Sharif to pull out of the Kashmir, ending the crises. However, this pullout was seen by Pakistani generals as a sign of weakness. Sharif eventually picked up on this discontent and sought U.S. help in securing his power. Allying himself with the CIA, the two sides created a Special Forces team that could go into Afghanistan and snatch bin Laden. But before this team could act against bin Laden, Sharif was overthrown and Pervez Musharraf, the Chief of the Army Staff, became the new leader of Pakistan. The Special Forces team disappeared.\(^8\)

\(^6\) Clarke, p. 189.


\(^8\) Coll, pp. 480-83.
The second window was in 2001. Musharraf came under new and similar pressure from the newly elected administration of George W. Bush. At the same time, Mullah Omar sent messages to Musharraf demanding that he employ Islamic law into Pakistan. "Otherwise," according to Omar, "there would be 'instability' in [Pakistan]." The combination of U.S. pressure and Taliban threats led many civilian leaders of the Pakistani government to question whether or not the benefits of regional security and stability outweighed the costs of having the U.S. and the Taliban as enemies. Some civilian and military officials saw a benefit in ending the strong Pakistani relationship with the Taliban. According to Steve Coll, only "a few generals in Musharraf's cabinet sided with the civilians." And, since Musharraf was in debt to his generals for putting him in power, he did not see the benefits of going against the Taliban, whom his generals supported. Also, Musharraf agreed with his generals that, "Pakistan needed reliable ... allies next door."

**Relations with the United States**

On two occasions Pakistan provided support to the CIA with regard to previous acts of terrorism against the United States. The first was with the capture of Ramzi

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9 "Diplomacy," p. 16.

10 Coll, p. 553.

11 Ibid., p. 553.

12 Ibid., p. 553.

13 Weaver, p. 31.

14 Coll., p. 553.
Yousef. Yousef was responsible for the first World Trade Center bombing in 1993.\textsuperscript{15} The second was Mir Aimal Kansi. In 1993, Kansi went to the entrance of CIA headquarters and shot multiple employees, killing three. Both culprits chose Pakistan as their getaway after the terrorist acts. Pakistan helped the U.S. capture both criminals and helped the CIA bring them to the U.S.\textsuperscript{16} In May of 1998, both India and Pakistan – who are long standing enemies – tested nuclear bombs, making Pakistan a nuclear power. As a result, the United States, which promoted nuclear non-proliferation, punished both countries by imposing sanctions.\textsuperscript{17}

This coincided with the Africa embassy bombings, which made bin Laden a key focus of U.S. south Asian policy, and Pakistan a suddenly very important ally. However, few in the U.S. government felt they could trust Pakistan due to the support the ISI gave to the Taliban and al Qaeda.\textsuperscript{18} This mistrust damaged the relationship even further when, nearly two weeks after the embassy bombings, the U.S. decided to shoot missiles at al Qaeda training camps and at a meeting where bin Laden and other terrorist leaders were supposed to be.\textsuperscript{19} The U.S. informed Pakistan of the missile launch about ten minutes before it took place, which angered the Pakistani government that knew that such a decision was due to U.S. mistrust.\textsuperscript{20} As noted above, the attack did not succeed, and only one of the six facilities to be hit by missiles was an al Qaeda training camp. In fact, two

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\textsuperscript{15} Clarke, p. 77.
\textsuperscript{16} Weaver, p. 34.
\textsuperscript{17} "Diplomacy," p. 12.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p. 11.
\textsuperscript{19} 9/11 Commission Report, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{20} Weaver, p. 33.
\end{flushleft}
of the sites were training facilities for ISI recruits. According to Mary Anne Weaver, “Five ISI officers and some twenty trainees were killed.” However, despite the fact that they were warned only minutes prior to the missile strikes, the Pakistani Navy noticed the group of U.S. destroyers preparing for an attack. Pakistan’s Navy warned its government, including the ISI, which, more likely than not, informed al Qaeda and the Taliban.

For the next year, whenever Clinton met with Sharif, nuclear tensions and relations with India always topped the agenda. Bin Laden was discussed, but more as a secondary issue. Whenever he was discussed, both Clinton and Bush would ask the Pakistani government to solve the problem themselves for the United States. The U.S. said that this could be accomplished by convincing the Taliban to hand over bin Laden through sanctions and personal requests. Pakistan never employed sanctions, and whenever Pakistan asked for bin Laden, Afghanistan simply said no. When Sharif or Musharraf met with members of the Clinton or Bush administrations, the Pakistani leaders told the U.S. that the issue would have to be solved diplomatically with Afghanistan. They claimed Pakistan did not have much influence over the Taliban.

When it came to U.S. demands of Pakistan, there was little to offer Pakistan in return for its cooperation. The sanctions from the U.S. made Pakistan its most “heavily

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21 Ibid., pp. 32-33.
22 Clarke, p. 188.
24 Ibid., p. 13.
sanctioned ... ally.” Further sanctions could have been introduced, but it was feared that such an action would have bankrupted Pakistan; and a bankrupt country with nuclear weapons and ties to the Taliban and bin Laden was far from desirable to U.S. officials.

Pakistani officials felt like they were being treated as servants of the U.S. instead of as allies. They also thought that the only reason contacts were as prominent as they were was due to India and bin Laden. Demands the U.S. made concerning the Taliban and bin Laden were therefore considered very offensive. According to Weaver, these feelings of frustration were exacerbated by the relationship that the U.S. had with India. In 1999, the U.S. lifted the sanctions against India while keeping those against Pakistan.

Also, in 2000, Clinton made a five-day trip to India. When he went to Pakistan, it was for six hours, and none of the Pakistani people were allowed near Clinton or even to see him. This was due to security concerns and fears that Pakistan was not a safe country for the president to visit.

With the exception of the Pakistani snatch team, there was nothing the Clinton and Bush administrations offered Pakistan in return for its cooperation. This strained relationship would continue until the World Trade Center attacks on September 11, 2001, when Pakistan was given the choice of siding with the U.S. or with Afghanistan.

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26 Weaver, p. 34.
28 Weaver, pp. 34-35.
30 Ibid., p. 16.
Areas of Constraint to the CIA

Many factors constrained the CIA in Pakistan due to its importance to both the U.S. and Afghanistan. First, and most important, was the Pakistani belief for the necessity of a stable, pro-Pakistan government in Afghanistan. Along with providing protection along the western Pakistani borders, it also relieved Pakistan of the responsibility of participating diplomatically and militarily in a foreign civil war.\(^3\)

Operating a snatch team out of Pakistan also proved to be an obstacle. The Pakistanis would not have supported U.S. special operations forces in Pakistan, so those who were better qualified for the job were removed from the equation. The Pakistani snatch team, on the other hand, could have been valuable. However, had the snatch team been employed, the ISI most likely would have tipped off bin Laden. This problem removed an effective staging area for potential U.S. operations.

The issue of an operation center in Pakistan emerged again with regard to flights over Afghanistan, especially with the Predator drone. Like U.S. soldiers, the Pakistani people would not have supported U.S. use of Pakistani airbases. This removed a base that could have helped provide actionable intelligence concerning the whereabouts of bin Laden. It was also possible that the U.S. could have employed multiple drones to multiple parts of the country. This would have added to more potential sightings and intelligence about where bin Laden would be.

On a related issue, missile strikes against potential al Qaeda sites and bin Laden locations were difficult, and not just for reasons of actionable intelligence. Had the U.S. launched missiles, Pakistan would have needed to be informed. The U.S. did not want the Pakistanis thinking that the missiles came from India. By informing Pakistan, the

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\(^3\) Weaver, p. 44.
potential for confusion as to who launched the missiles and the danger of a potential nuclear war was removed. However, informing Pakistan also carried the risk that some in the Pakistani government (e.g., ISI) would have informed al Qaeda and bin Laden in enough time so that the missile strikes would be unsuccessful.

Anti-U.S. sentiment was strong enough in Pakistan to hurt the relationship between Pakistan and the U.S. One of the reasons for the souring relationship was the sustained sanctions against Pakistan with the drop of the sanctions against India. Overall mistrust also upset Pakistani officials. If the U.S. was not going to trust the Pakistanis, why should the Pakistanis trust and help the U.S.? These factors provided little incentive to help the U.S. with bin Laden.

Another problem was how the U.S. approached Pakistan, which was similar to how Pakistan approached Afghanistan. The U.S. demanded without removing any of the sanctions it held against Pakistan nor threatened with any future punishments. Pakistan and Afghanistan were similar in their relationship. Pakistan did not offer more rewards (e.g., aid, training, weapons) nor threatened to remove any of these gifts. Afghanistan, therefore, along with Pakistan, had little reason to comply with any of the requests made concerning bin Laden.

However, Musharraf’s claim that Pakistan had no influence in Afghanistan is simply untrue. Though Pakistan did not employ any methods of persuasion to influence Afghanistan, it did have leverage that it could have used that might have made a difference to other leaders in the Taliban, not just Omar. This included the denial of oil, weapons, training, and other aid. Withholding this aid may have convinced some of Omar’s subordinates that Omar may not have been the best person for the job. Plus,

Pakistan had leverage as one of only three states to recognize the Taliban as the legitimate rulers of Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{33} Though as shown later in chapter five, threatening a break in such relations would not have the desired effect of a cooperative Taliban.

There is also the issue of money. Money can be a powerful incentive if given to the right people, since, according to the cliché, everyone has a price. And since the CIA uses money in order to accomplish certain tasks and to preserve/make relationships (as was the case with the Northern Alliance), such actions may have been preferred. However, the relationships between the CIA, the ISI, the Taliban, and al Qaeda were so complex and rooted in culture that use of money as an incentive became less important. The cliché would not have been true. For example, the ISI supported the Taliban, and the Taliban supported al Qaeda. The reasons for this support went beyond monetary gain. Pakistan wanted an ally next door, and the Taliban liked bin Laden both personally and ideologically. Money, therefore, became less important than what they valued – support for each other.

\textsuperscript{33} Clarke, p. 208.
Chapter IV

Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan

During the 1990’s, the former Soviet central Asian republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, were largely overlooked by the U.S. government. Two main factors played into this relationship: first, all of the three “republics” after the fall of the Soviet Union retained their authoritarian forms of government. Since they were not seen as very important, this was the excuse to not deal with them.¹ Second, from the perspective of Washington, an initial deterrent was the belief that any move by the U.S. that could appear to be a military alliance between the U.S. and the three republics would undermine the government of Boris Yeltsin. The Cold War was over and the U.S. did not want another dictator to assume control over Russia. The U.S. therefore abstained from pursuing military and diplomatic alliances in that region.²

Despite these concerns, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan did help fight against the Taliban and al Qaeda. For example, they both supported the Northern Alliance, and Uzbekistan even provided it with aid.³ Further, both saw Afghanistan as a tool of Pakistan, and therefore sought to limit Pakistani influence in Central Asia.⁴ On the U.S. side, the fact that each of these three states shared borders with Afghanistan made them prime operating ground for the use of Predator drones and special operations teams.

⁴Menon, p. 97.
Tajikistan

Tajikistan was a territory torn apart by civil war for years. In 1997, peace was, “brokered by Russia and Iran,” which temporarily ended the fighting between the secular government and the different Islamic groups.  

However, the government feared that a deal allowing the U.S. to use Tajik airbases would destroy this peace settlement. The fact that the Taliban supported the Islamic terrorists in Tajikistan could have been helpful. The Tajik government could have supported attacks against its enemy’s enemy (i.e., the Taliban), but this proved too risky for Tajikistan.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan, unlike Tajikistan, was sitting on a massive supply of natural gas and oil. UNOCAL, a U.S. based oil company, proposed to build an oil pipeline that would stretch from Turkmenistan, across southern Afghanistan, and into Pakistan, where it could then be sold to the U.S. Turkmenistan had another pipeline that ran through Iran to Turkey. The prospect of two oil pipelines and a massive increase in wealth affected Turkmenistan’s relations with Afghanistan. For example, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan met to discuss the rise of internal Islamic extremism and the threat of a powerful Afghanistan. Turkmenistan, however, abstained out of fear of what participating in such a meeting

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5 Ibid., p. 99.
6 Ibid., p. 99.
7 Ibid., p. 97.
8 Meyer, 193.
9 Coll, p. 302.
10 Menon, p. 98.
could do to the possible oil deal. After the missile strikes in August of 1998, UNOCAL backed out, fearing that Afghanistan was too unstable for such an expensive project.

The U.S. was still unable to gain support and access to military bases even after the pipeline deal fell through. There are four possible reasons for this: one, the government of Turkmenistan was mad about losing the UNOCAL deal and so wanted nothing else to do with the U.S. Another possibility is that, due to a negative CIA reputation, the Turkmen government “wanted nothing to do with the CIA.” A third possibility is that Turkmenistan feared the anger of the Taliban and wanted to avoid a souring Afghan relationship. Lastly, Turkmenistan may have hoped that the stability in Afghanistan would improve, thereby increasing the possibility of a new UNOCAL pipeline deal. Of course, this deal would only be possible if Afghanistan was not upset with Turkmenistan for, say, helping the CIA.

**Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan was by far the most cooperative of the three governments concerning the U.S., the CIA, and counter-terrorism. Like Tajikistan, Uzbekistan had its issues with Islamic extremism, especially with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. In 1999, the CIA approached Uzbekistan’s leader, Islam Karimov, with a proposition for an, “intelligence alliance focused on their mutual enemies in Afghanistan.” The initial

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11 Goodson, p. 166.
12 Ewans, p. 198.
13 Coll, p. 458.
14 Menon., p. 97.
agreement allowed for the CIA to use Uzbek air bases and for sharing intelligence about al Qaeda. Another agreement was that the U.S. would train an Uzbek counterterrorism team that could possibly help the CIA in covert operations, including a possible bin Laden snatch operation.\(^{16}\) This last agreement did not fully develop. According to General Anthony Zinni, the Commander and Chief of U.S. Central Command, building up “local counterterrorism capabilities in neighboring countries ... was impeded by a lack of funds and limited interest in countries, like Uzbekistan, that had dictatorial governments.”\(^{17}\)

The CIA would need Uzbekistan a year in September of 2000 for use with the Predator drone. The Uzbeks would host the Predator while the pilots at CIA at Langley would pilot it (under the condition that the relationship was kept secret).\(^{18}\)

**Areas of Constraint to the CIA**

With regard to Tajikistan, the civil war turned out to be a big problem for the U.S. counterterrorism efforts. Few in management level positions at the CIA and at the Department of Defense would have supported sending in special operations soldiers and CIA operatives into an area as unstable and unsafe as Tajikistan.\(^{19}\) If this had not been the case, the CIA could have had better coordination with the Northern Alliance and possibly could have performed a snatch operation on their own without having to rely on the proxies and Pakistan.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 459.

\(^{17}\) “The Military,” p. 6.

\(^{18}\) Coll, p. 531.

\(^{19}\) “The Military,” pp. 5-6; and Clarke, p. 150.
With regard to Turkmenistan and its oil pipeline, since Iran and the U.S. were far from being friends, Turkmenistan feared a blow to its primary source of revenue should it develop closer military relations with the U.S.\textsuperscript{20} Had the Afghanistan oil pipeline project succeeded, it is possible that it could have given the CIA an ‘in’ into Turkmenistan. However, after the project failed to materialize, Turkmenistan was still reluctant to help the CIA and the U.S. out of fear of Iran. They did not want their current source of revenue to be damaged.

With regard to Uzbekistan, the area of constraint was the fear Karimov had regarding domestic politics. Like Sharif in Pakistan, Karimov feared that if his relationship with the CIA became public, his rule would be at risk.\textsuperscript{21} Had this fear not developed, then it is possible that Uzbekistan would have made a more open arrangement with the U.S., including the possibility of providing a base for U.S. counterterrorism forces.

\textsuperscript{20} Menon, p. 98.

\textsuperscript{21} Coll, p. 459.
Chapter V

Saudi Arabia

Afghan Relations

According to Coll, “Saudi Arabia ... feared Iranian influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia. The Taliban were useful allies for the aims of Saudi statecraft, but they also promoted Islamic values in accord with Saudi theology.”¹ This is a good summary of Saudi-Afghan relations with the Taliban prior to 1998. Saudi Arabia and the Taliban both exercise the Sunni branch of Islam. Iran, however, utilizes the Shia branch, which has, at times, been at conflict with the Sunni.² Saudi Arabia, therefore, saw Afghanistan as an ally along the eastern border of Iran, while it lay on the western border. After the Taliban took control of most of Afghanistan in 1996, Saudi Arabia, along with Pakistan and the UAE, granted the Taliban diplomatic recognition.³

Prior to the 1998 bombings in Africa, the U.S. searched for places to send bin Laden to be tried and imprisoned for terrorism. Due to the fact that he had not yet killed any Americans (as was thus far proven), he could not be tried in an American court.⁴ Saudi Arabia was seen as a desirable state. However, the Saudi’s feared a “domestic backlash” for helping the U.S. imprison a Saudi who possessed some popularity among the Saudi people.⁵ The Saudis, therefore, declined the request.⁶

¹ Coll, p. 297.
² Ibid., p. 339.
³ Ibid., p. 349.
⁴ Ibid., p. 323.
Shortly before the 1998 bombings, a New York grand jury issued a sealed indictment against bin Laden due to the increasing threat of al Qaeda. Shortly after, the U.S. pressured Saudi Arabia to speak to the Taliban about bin Laden. The Saudi government sent representatives from the General Intelligence Department, Saudi Arabia’s intelligence agency. After debating with Mullah Omar and explaining how bin Laden was a threat to the Saudi kingdom, the Saudi intelligence officers received a promise that the Taliban would hand over bin Laden. After the embassy bombings of 1998, the U.S. asked Saudi Arabia to intervene quickly. Back in Afghanistan, the Saudi intelligence officers were told by Omar that bin Laden would not be handed over. Angry words were exchanged, and diplomatic relations were suspended, but not broken.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia believed that Iran was “on the verge of going to war with the Taliban. The Saudis and the Pakistanis feared that a further break might encourage Iran to attack.”

**Relations with the United States**

The Gulf War in 1991 and fear of Iraq reinforced an alliance that existed during the Cold War. But after the Gulf War, Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, along with others in the Saudi government, sought more independence from the U.S. They no

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6 Ibid., p. 116.
8 Ibid., p. 9.
11 Gause, p. 116.
longer faced a danger like the kind that came from the Soviet Union and Iraq. Abdullah therefore wanted to actively pursue policies that ran contrary to U.S. interests. For example, he was opposed to U.S. support of Israel, and chose to support Palestine, though this was nothing new. Also, he wanted a better relationship with Iran, despite U.S. protests.  

With regard to terrorism, Saudi Arabia was largely unhelpful to the CIA. The Saudis had broken up terrorist cells and disrupted terrorist plots. But they did not allow the CIA, or any other U.S. official, to question terrorist suspects, even when the attack was directed at U.S. interests.  

Plus, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia had different definitions of terrorism. For the Saudis, a terrorist act could only take place against civilian targets. If a civilian group were to target the military, the attack would be seen as legitimate.  

With regard to Afghanistan, the U.S. wanted Saudi Arabia to control and limit donations to the Taliban. However, the Saudis had no method of controlling the donations. For example, how would the donations be spent by the Taliban once they reached Afghanistan?

**Areas of Constraint to the CIA**

The Saudi desire for a strong ally against Iran worked against Saudi-CIA cooperation. For Afghanistan to be strong, it needed to be united, and the Taliban was the group that was closest to achieving total control. This is also the reason why

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15 Ibid., p. 8.
diplomatic relations were only suspended and not severed; from the Saudi viewpoint, it was better to have a united and strong Afghanistan, as opposed to an ally that was divided and weak.

After refusing to hand over bin Laden, and after diplomatic relations were suspended, a further break may have resulted in a positive outcome (i.e., turning over bin Laden), but it is not likely. Saudi Arabia was the most important country to the Taliban (except Pakistan) due to its aid and diplomatic support, and therefore an important ally. If a downturn in Afghan-Pakistani relations would not convince Omar to hand over bin Laden, then it is unlikely that a clear break of diplomatic relations would help.

The CIA was also hurt by Saudi domestic issues. The Saudi government, fearing that it would be viewed as a pawn of America, wanted to be seen as an independent state. If word got out that the CIA was interrogating Saudi suspects, dissent would grow and riots could ensue. This fear, combined with the desire to become more independent, convinced the Saudi government to provide little assistance to the CIA with regard to interrogations.

The limited oversight of charities sent abroad was also problematic. Since there was no oversight of where the money went, it could end up in the hands of any terrorist group with the right connections. It is reasonable to assume, due to the close relationship that the Taliban and bin Laden had, that some of the donations from Saudi Arabia may have landed in the hands of al Qaeda.

Since the Saudi view of terrorism was different than that of the United States, full support against terrorism could not be guaranteed. Even though the Saudi definition prohibited attacks against civilians, differing definitions lead to different conclusions
about attacks. For example, to what extent were the attacks against the African embassies directed at the U.S. military in those embassies or against the civilians? Disagreements in such cases were certain to develop, which would mean that the Saudi government could not completely agree about the threat of bin Laden and al Qaeda.
Conclusion

It has been shown how the diplomatic relationships among states constrained the CIA in Afghanistan from 1996-2001. Within Afghanistan, the decision of the Taliban to stick with bin Laden and al Qaeda despite international pressure, a lack of faith in the Northern Alliance, and the absence of diplomatic recognition all contributed to the failure of the CIA to fulfill its mission in Afghanistan. In Pakistan, the desire for a strong and stable ally for military and economic reasons combined with a refusal to help the U.S. and the U.N., the denial of U.S. access to Pakistani bases for counterterrorism operations, U.S. sanctions, and U.S. distrust of Pakistan played a large role in Afghanistan. As for Tajikistan, the fear that U.S. involvement in the country would damage the peace between warring parties hurt the CIA’s chances in the country. In Turkmenistan, the prospect and eventual failure of the UNOCAL oil pipeline deal led the state to avoid CIA deals. In Uzbekistan, fear of a publicly known alliance with the CIA might damage the ruling party also prevented the CIA from operating completely in that state. Finally, in Saudi Arabia, there was the desire for a strong ally against Iran and a lack of public U.S. support out of fear of domestic reprisal. The Saudi lack of oversight with regard to charities and donations to Afghanistan along with conflicting U.S.-Saudi views on terrorism contributed to a constrained CIA in Afghanistan.

It should be noted that not all of these factors came from a geopolitical analysis. In fact, nearly all of the diplomatic factors and areas of constraint due to the Taliban sprung from internal dynamics. For example, Taliban support for al Qaeda had more to do with ideologies and what bin Laden could do for the country of Afghanistan and little to do with Afghan diplomatic relations. Also, domestic issues led to public U.S.
discontent. Geopolitics did not play a large factor. It was fear of domestic uprisings and what those uprisings would do to the state of Saudi Arabia. External factors were not as important as Saudi support for the Taliban out of a desire for a strong ally against Iran.

So why focus on external factors? One reason is that it shows the interdependence of states. By understanding what influences states, it is easier to determine how they will behave. For example, how did Iran and oil revenues affect Tajikistan’s decisions? Why did Pakistan support the Taliban given the international pressure and icy relationship between Musharraf and Omar? External factors help to answer these questions.

Another reason why external factors are important is because they (in this case) can lead to better decisions and actions with regard to diplomacy and counter-terrorism. By understanding how states relate, it can be determined how states are going to react when certain actions are taken (e.g., sanctions against Pakistan) and when certain requests are made (e.g., “Give us bin Laden”) becomes more predictable. It is useful to understand what is going on inside and outside a state, both politically and culturally, in order for counterterrorism to be productive. Analysis of all factors (external, internal, and individual) is needed for counter-terrorism and diplomacy to be truly effective.

Understanding diplomatic relationships is necessary for employment of effective counterterrorism. As can be seen in this study, global interactions can have unexpected consequences. For example, those who understood diplomacy and international relations would have known that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, U.S. allies, would drag their feet or do nothing to help the United States with regard to bin Laden and the Taliban. Being considerate of diplomatic relationships, as mentioned above, can provide insight by
showing where U.S. military and CIA officers can operate from, which society would be most friendly to a U.S. presence, and which state would be most sympathetic to an American cause.
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